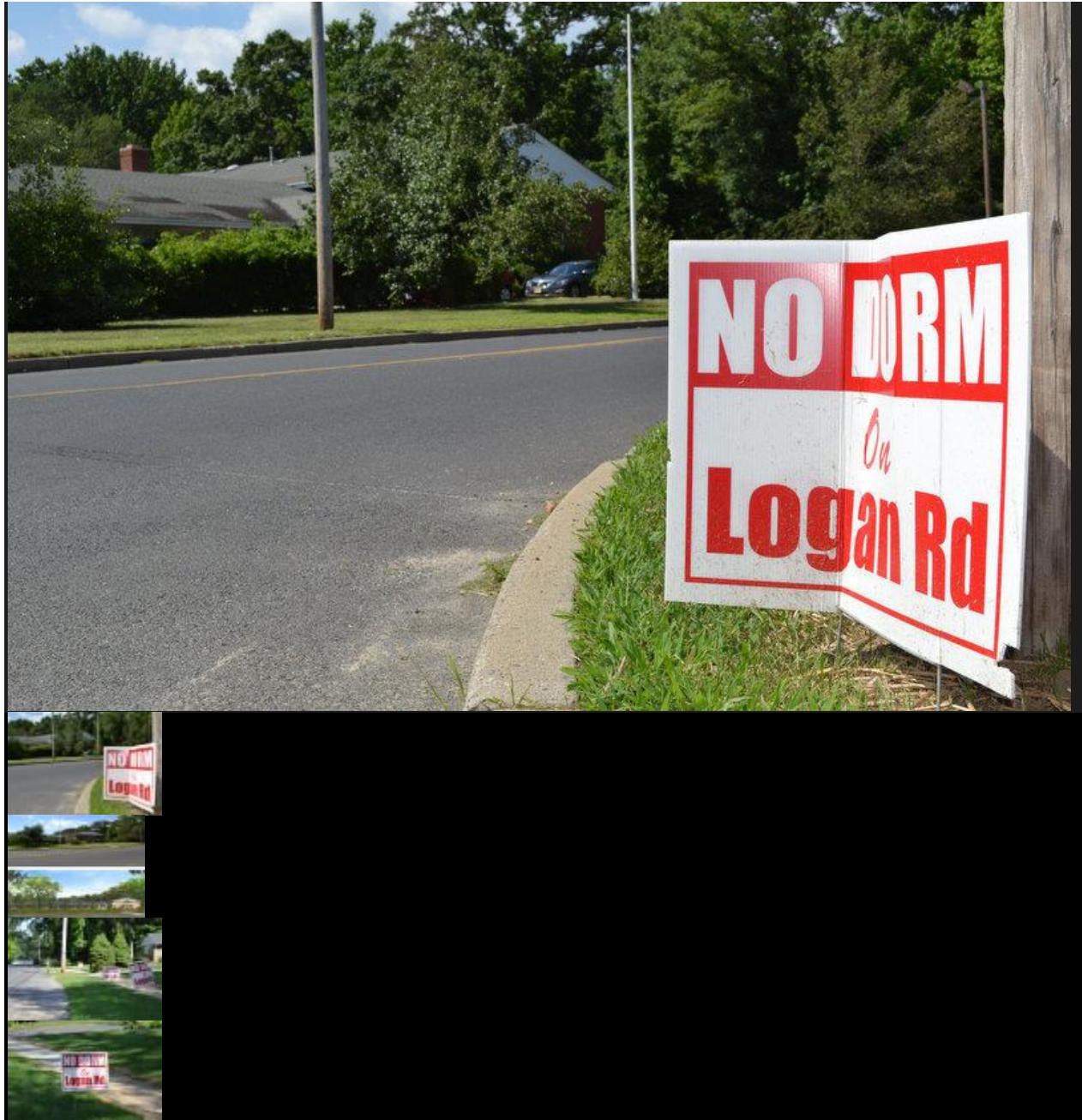


Yeshiva sues Shore town after denial of boarding school application





1 / 10

Residents in the Wanamassa section of Ocean Township are up in arms about the prospects of a 96-student Yeshiva boarding school coming to Logan Road. (Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com).

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By [Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

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on January 11, 2016 at 2:26 PM, updated January 12, 2016 at 9:22 AM

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[OCEAN TWP.](#) — A group representing a proposed Jewish boarding school is suing the township and its Zoning Board of Adjustment after its application for a 96-student Yeshiva was denied late last year.

The 79-page complaint filed on Friday in U.S. District Court alleges that the Zoning Board's denial of the Yeshiva, whose students, ages 18 to 22, would live on

premises, is a violation of the First and 14th amendments, Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) and Fair Housing Act.

The lawsuit, which names the township and its Zoning Board, also accuses residents of having "hostility and animus to Orthodox Jews," and charges that the township's zoning laws do not accommodate Orthodox Jewish educational institutions.



[Ocean Township residents fighting planned Yeshiva](#)

Residents say the new school will drive down their property value and alter the makeup of the area, but those representing the applicant assure the students will keep to themselves.

The attorney representing the Zoning Board, Mark A. Steinberg, declined to comment on the lawsuit. The township's attorney, Martin J. Arbus, said he could not comment on the lawsuit because he hadn't seen the complaint yet.

"As far as I'm concerned, the denial was a procedural denial and the Board wasn't given an opportunity to hear the entire case and make a determination on the merits," Arbus said.

The application, filed by Yeshiva Gedola Na'os Yaakov, for the boarding school on 1515 Logan Road was submitted in June 2014. It sought to transform a building that currently houses a Jewish day school with 101 elementary-aged students into a

boarding school where students ages 18 to 22 could earn a bachelor's degree in Talmudic studies.



Ocean Township residents fill the high school's gymnasium, where many of the Zoning Board of Adjustment's special meetings for the yeshiva application were held last year. (Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)

But residents in Ocean Township fiercely opposed the application, with thousands showing up to the Zoning Board meetings. The meetings were eventually moved to the Ocean Township High School gymnasium to accommodate the influx in attendance.

After nine public hearings, the [Board unanimously ruled on Dec. 1 to deny the controversial application](#). The applicant had previously granted the Board permission to move past the state's 120-day limit, but denied a time extension request by the Board, forcing its members to vote before hearing testimony from the public, and witnesses and experts brought on behalf of attorneys representing a group of objectors.

The lawsuit said the residents' efforts to pack the meetings, causing further delays in the application process, were fueled by "unsubstantiated fears of, and prejudice against, Orthodox Jewish men." It also says anti-Semitic undertones were displayed on several social media websites and in the comment sections of news organizations.

For example, in a comment on a [petition created on change.org](#), someone expressed fear that Ocean Township could turn into Lakewood, an Ocean County township with a large Orthodox Jewish population.

"I owned property in Lakewood NJ for 24 years," the commenter wrote. "Orthodox Jewish landlords made life a living hell for me there! I would hate to see this repeated in Ocean!"

Another commenter said, "There are plenty of other places for radical religious schools."

"This is bigotry masked as a zoning hearing, pure and simple" -- Roman P. Storzer

But in public meetings last year, [residents harped on other concerns](#) that had little to do with religion, like noise complaints and traffic flow.

One resident who lived adjacent to the school's proposed location, Darren Snyder, [told NJ Advance Media](#) that he was concerned the Yeshiva would drive down his property value.

But even after addressing the residents' complaints, in part by restricting the students from leaving the premises, residents still spoke out against the applicant, the lawsuit said.

That opposition must be rooted in "hostility and animus to Orthodox Jews," the lawsuit claims.

The lawsuit accuses the Board of failing to curb "lengthy, repetitive, irrelevant and improper testimony" by residents in public portions of the meetings, which delayed the application process.

The Yeshiva Gedola application is the third attempt for a Jewish school to move into Ocean Township. The two previous applicants, both filed in 2010, pulled their applications after they were met with "similar community resistance," the lawsuit said.

"This pattern of organized opposition to yeshiva applications demonstrates significant hostility against Orthodox Jewish land uses by Ocean Township residents," the lawsuit says.

The lawsuit also charges that the township's zoning laws do little to accommodate Jewish schools.

The township prohibits dormitories for students above the age of 18. It allows private Christian schools, but has not "accommodated Jewish religious practices, as Jewish males traditionally attend yeshivot for longer periods into their early 20s."

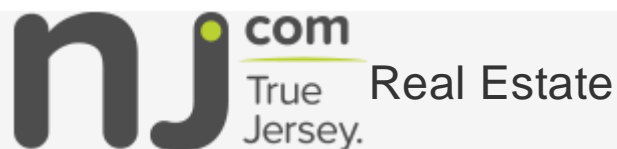
"The Township's explicit prohibition against dormitories for students above the age of 18 was specifically targeted at Orthodox Jewish educational institutions," the lawsuit says.

The township also permits other nonreligious schools for students older than 18 years of age, like schools teaching art, dance and business, the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit seeks to overturn the Zoning Board's decision and approve the Yeshiva application. It also seeks compensatory damages and the full cost of attorneys' fees.

"This is bigotry masked as a zoning hearing, pure and simple," said Roman P. Storzer, a Washington, D.C.-based attorney representing the applicant. "The situation that the Yeshiva has faced here is exactly why Congress decided that RLUIPA's protections are necessary."

Alex Napolliello may be reached at anapoliello@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on Twitter [@alexnapoNJ](https://twitter.com/alexnapoNJ). Find NJ.com on Facebook.



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infiniti2009 4 days ago

Why not build a kosher slaughter house too?

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JoesGarage 8 days ago

Residence have a right to protect their home values. The Variance process ensures that codes and standards are met; we ALL have to adhere to them. This process does not discriminate, nor does it favor anyone. The Stop n Shop is another example where residents' opposition prevailed. In this case the Applicant refused to extend while the process worked...that was THEIR choice. The Board was forced to deny their application (since they were unable to hear both sides of the issues). So NOW the Applicant is saying they want to change the rules? Shame on you...for trying to ram this down Ocean's residents' throats. Shame on you for playing the "race card". Shame on you for trying to abuse the system. I strongly urge the Zoning Board to stand its ground. We, the upstanding citizens who are willing to follow the rules, support this decision 100%.

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[Stubbs](#) 5 days ago[@JoesGarage](#) Their all on the take !

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chriss038 days ago

" by restricting the students from leaving the premises," , How is this not imprisonment? How is this not child abuse? There is something very unhealthy about this kind of institution.

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[Alnitak](#) 8 days ago

@chriss03 it's not child abuse because the students will be in the 18-22 year old range. But their claim to restrict the students from leaving is false. They cannot keep them there 24/7.

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[diablous](#) 8 days ago

Fight these religious kooks tooth and nail, their only agenda is to establish tax-exempt holdings to use as a launching pad to bilk any and all government agencies they possibly can. Look at Kiryas Joel in NY, the highest percentage of welfare recipients in the entire nation. Ignore their stupid cries of "anti-semitism", they're just as dangerous as any other group of nutty religious extremists. They WILL swoop in and bleed your town dry in any way they possibly can, it's what they do.

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Stubbs 5 days ago
@diablous Lakewood ?

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PatrickJamesJC 8 days ago

Maybe the town should declare the property as an area in need of redevelopment. Thus paving the way for eminent domain.

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2



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elf25s 8 days ago

religious prosecution and freedom is taken a bit too far.

if people who live there do not want it and they said so on many occasion why are these holier than thou think they can still force their way in where they are not wanted under the guise of religious prosecution?

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jacaza 8 days ago

They are doing this in other towns too. They ask for temples, mikvahs, etc. be built in residential areas and threaten to sue when they are denied. When these places are built they don't have to pay taxes, which is bad for the town. It's a disgrace what they get away with because towns don't have the guts to stand up to them!

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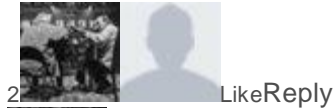
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diablous 8 days ago

@jacaza They have absolutely no interest whatsoever in being "good neighbors", they only seek to bleed municipalities dry in any way possible. The whole thing is a huge scam hidden behind "faith".

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[KoolBreeze](#) 7 days ago
[@diablous](#) [@jacaza](#) BINGO!!! ACCURATE AND ON THE \$\$\$\$\$\$ POST.

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[Stubbs](#) 5 days ago
[@jacaza](#) Long Branch, Their all getting grease ask Chubby .

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[bricksco](#) 8 days ago
Not to change the subject but perhaps you /others can settle on a question in search of an answer?

(1). Do the folks inhabiting Lakewood religious franchises pay automobile insurance like the rest of us? I was told this was why their cars/vans/vehicles look like demolition derby graduates.

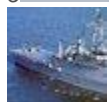
(2). What about their REAL PROPERTY TAXES on their residences? Exempt?

Thank you.

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3 LikeReply



[NGH144](#) 8 days ago
[@bricksco](#) State law says you have to have auto insurance in order to register a car. Unless their house is considered a Temple, yes they pay property taxes.

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[boonj](#) 8 days ago

With the way they are taking over Lakewood, many times by threatening homeowners, I back Ocean 100%.

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7 LikeReply



Nora's Tea Party 8 days ago
Sounds like bigotry to me.

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This comment has been deleted



molly2.0 8 days ago
@Angrywhyteman wait. what? I thought it was the Muslims who were trying to take over our country. I'm sooo confused!

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zen-40.com 8 days ago
"The Township's explicit prohibition against dormitories for students above the age of 18 was specifically targeted at Orthodox Jewish educational institutions," the lawsuit says

Really? It has nothing to do with the fact that there are parts of the township (which I grew up in) that are within a couple of miles of Monmouth U?

That being said, I don't have a horse in this race as I haven't lived in the township for over 20 years.

Just checked the location and it's directly across the street from Doc Dahrouge's park. It's probably not the best location in the township for this.

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[shawnr](#) 8 days ago

Hold strong Ocean Township. Groups or individuals can't just pick a spot and then try to strong-arm the town into bending over backwards to accommodate. Not how it works....

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[Stubbs](#) 5 days ago

[@shawnr](#) Cash is King !

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[Usaidwhat](#) 8 days ago

The board did the proper thing based on what is known. The Yeshivas here, in North a Jersey and Rockland counties are running a quasi scam on locals. While a lot is above board, a lot is back doored to subvert local laws and taxes. The pols look the other way to garner votes and local developers are on the inside to help run out local owners to pull into the Yeshiva conglomerate. No so much a religious issue but a way to get taxes lowered and house congregants on the states dime

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[Stubbs](#) 5 days ago

[@Usaidwhat](#) See Long Branch !

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[You Can't Be Serious...](#) 8 days ago

When all else fails.. when you don't get your way.. cry racism and bigotry.

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watchdoggggg8 days ago
If it's not "their way", then they sue.

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6 LikeReply



[doofus11](#) 8 days ago
Not shocked that residents don't want what is a 96-student private college in their neighborhood. Certainly would change the character forever.

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[diablous](#) 8 days ago
[@doofus11](#) And it isn't just a "college", it's a fundamentalist breeding ground full of rude, backwards weirdos who will spread like a virus.

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[elaterman](#) 8 days ago
Cant blame them for not wanting it. Spring Valley has quite a few of these and the property's end up looking like dumps.

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6 LikeReply



[Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) 8 days ago
[@elaterman](#) If you look at the second photo in the gallery, you can see an architectural rendering of what the proposed Yeshiva would look like.

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[kodiakkid](#) 8 days ago

[@Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) [@elaterman](#) Did you ever see what the architectural renderings were for the new housing complexes in Newark? You wouldn't let your pet stay in one just a few years after they went up.

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[elaterman](#) 8 days ago

[@Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) [@elaterman](#) Its not what they start out looking like. Its how they end up after a few years of being lived in and "cared" for.

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[Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) 8 days ago

[@elaterman](#) [@Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) Your comments are on the record. I wasn't arguing one way or the other -- just wanted to make sure you saw the rendering. Thanks.

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[elaterman](#) 8 days ago

[@Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) [@elaterman](#) I totally hear ya on that, thanks.

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[Usaidwhat](#) 8 days ago

I suggest one goes to Monsey NY and look at how the game is played. Monsey has had its politicians replAced wholesale, it's tax base shrunk due to land being bought by the congregations and whole hosts of mini section 8 dwellings built for the congregants.

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[elaterman](#) 8 days ago
[@Usaidwhat](#) I forgot all about Monsey, good point.

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[Stubbs](#) 5 days ago
[@Alex Napoliello | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#) [@elaterman](#) How's the Lawsuit going in Long Branch ?

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